

Supplementary Information

Introduction to Community Urgent Care in Oxfordshire

Oxfordshire's community-based urgent & emergency care (UEC) services provide excellent care to many thousands of patients each year. The bulk of the NHS services in this community pathway are provided by Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust (OHFT), alongside Oxford University Hospitals NHS FT (OUHFT) and local primary care partners, such as the PCNs and GP Federation partners. Social care partners and voluntary organisations also provide key same-day services that interact closely with this NHS provision to provide integrated health and care provision.

Community SDECs

On a predominantly, but not exclusively ambulatory basis, OHFT have three Community Same Day Emergency Care (cSDEC) units, based in Abingdon Community Hospital (AEMU), Witney Community Hospital (WEMU) and Henley Townlands Memorial Hospital (RACU). These units are staffed by a multi-disciplinary team including doctors, specialist practitioners, nurses, and therapy teams. Working together, the teams assess and treat patients referred from primary and secondary care, ambulance crews and other community-based health care professionals when patients either require step up medical care beyond what is offered by routine primary care or via integrated neighbourhood teams thus reducing the need for A&E attendance or admission under the medical team.

The units operate between the hours of 0800 and 2000 Monday – Friday, with some units also open at weekends and public holidays. However, the aim going forward, is to provide a more consistent and resiliently staffed 7-day service.

Diagnostic tools to facilitate patient assessment and treatment includes near patient blood and urine testing, ECGs, and plain radiography. The teams comprise of medical, nursing and AHPs staff. Therapeutic interventions include IV infusions, antibiotics, blood transfusions, nebulisers, nursing care, and therapy assessments. These holistic interventions provide viable alternatives to an acute admission for appropriate patients. While the aim is for most patients to return home on the same day, a number are brought back on an ambulatory basis and there are a small number of in-patient beds at Witney and Abingdon for the short-term admission of patients if required. Patients who require transfer to an acute hospital for further investigation or admission are referred to the John Radcliffe Hospital in Oxford (from Witney and Abingdon) or Royal Berkshire Hospital, Reading (from Henley).

Common presentations include:

- Fever/infection
- SOB - infection/COPD/Heart failure
- Electrolyte disturbances
- Falls.

Urgent Community Response (UCR)

For those patients who are acutely unwell and cannot easily travel to a clinic location, because of frailty, immobility or simply because they are too unwell, Oxford Health also provides a rapid or same day visiting response via the Urgent Community Response (UCR) team. The team consists of highly skilled Specialist Practitioners, District Nurses and Community Therapists who will take referrals from primary care and community teams and are able to assess and treat appropriate patients in their own home, avoiding admission to secondary care. This service also provides an important role in supporting the ambulance service to reduce unnecessary acute conveyance and managing care for patients in their place of residence. Medical cover is provided remotely to support decision making.

Hospital at Home, H@H (Virtual Ward)

Following recent transformation work, the county now has a joined-up H@H service staffed by both Oxford University Hospitals and Oxford Health. This service helps to provide hospital level care to patients at home, in the form of clinical assessment, Point of Care testing and administration of treatments such as IV antibiotics and IV fluids. This service provides continuity of care for those that need ongoing care past the initial assessment undertaken by primary care, secondary care, UCR, cSDECs and other community base health care professionals. The medical cover for this service is predominantly provided by a team of secondary care consultants with experience of managing patients in the community.

Out of Hours (OOHs)

Oxfordshire's GP Out of Hours service is operated by OHFT and provides urgent primary care for the population of Oxfordshire at a time outside of their normal practice opening hours. The clinical team consist of GPs, non-medical practitioners, nurses, and operational and administrative support. Clinicians working in this service will provide either telephone triage, clinic appointments or home visiting responses to referrals that are received from 111. Whilst our existing community urgent care services (cSDECs, UCR and SPA) tend not to overlap with OOH during the week, on a weekend day time, both exist at the same time, with some overlap with clinical work, be that call handling, visiting or base work. There is scope here, as staffing capacity allows, to improve our offering to both patients and for existing teams, and something we are looking to explore as this service grows.

Single Point of Access (SPA)

The Single Point of Access is a quick and easy way for GPs and other healthcare professionals to make referrals to community health services, e.g. community nursing and community therapy, for people living in Oxfordshire aged 18 years and over. It is an alternative route to making referrals directly to services.

The service particularly benefits patients who require multiple referrals or where the GP or healthcare professional is unsure which service they need to refer to.